843 A woman's role is to bear children. When she knows that she is pregnant, she no longer consents to come to her husband, but she is careful not to inform him of her state; if she told him, the child would die. If her parents happen to pass away during her pregnancy, she does not go into mourning and does not attend the funeral. If she is newly wed and has not yet borne children, one of the other wives of her husband, or, if there are none, the husband's sister, comes at night to sprinkle the husband and wife with water. The young wife will henceforth call this woman her husband, prepare millet mush for her, and heat the water in which she washes. When the pregnancy begins to show, one of the wife's female relatives consults the sorcerer [782] to find out which sacrifice should be offered so that all will go well, but the husband is not informed of this consultation. Sometimes the sacrifice is repeated when the birth draws near. When the first baby 851 is born, the husband sends a child to his wife's relatives with a rooster or a hen depending on the newborn's sex. The child tosses the bird into the yard without saying a word and runs away; everybody understands.

847 /40/ A child born deformed, lame, or blind is done away with; 845 it is simply drowned without further ado if considered incurable. In 732 olden times, twins were often drowned also because their birth entails 761 difficulties for the family, who must offer special sacrifices; some- 753 times only one of them was done away with. If they are spared and die a natural death, the mother wears a small bell at her ankle until the anniversary of the death (kouré). If the mother happens to die or the father becomes ill, the sorcerer need only say so and the children are put to death, because they are said to have caused the illness or death of their parents. A baby who could barely walk was once brought by relatives to the Koupéla Fathers. He had been born on a Friday and his mother had died; that was sufficient to call for his sacrifice. His relatives tried unsuccessfully to poison him; they exposed him for three days in the bush, and the child did not die. As a last resort they brought him to the missionaries, who hastened to shelter him. Children recognized as insane are abandoned in the bush where they die of hunger.

732 It is only fair to add, however, that these barbarous practices 845 reminiscent of Sparta are not invariably followed. Several lame and incurably ill children are carefully tended by their parents, and some twins born prior to the French occupation are alive and in good health.

753 /66/ This is because illness is usually attributed to an evil spirit,
761 which must not be irked with complaints. Yet in everyday language it is God who is the cause of everything, of health as well as of death. The sorcerers consulted indicate which spirit must be appeased, to whom sacrifices must be offered; or they state quite frankly that the hour of the sick person has come, that his life is over and he is about to rejoin his ancestors, for it is often the latter who call him and come to fetch him. In the case of old men and especially of old women, death is considered a natural event. An old man has many children who will give him a fine funeral, and it is time for him to make way for his eldest son. If a quarrelsome person falls sick, his
[763] illness is often attributed to an evil spell cast by an enemy. When an elder is about to die, those who have caused him offense come to beg his forgiveness and only find peace when they have obtained it, for the old man might return to obtain his revenge. Sudden death is usually ascribed to poison and, alas, this is often the case. Sometimes it is also attributed to an evil spirit, especially in case of accident, fall, snake bite, etc.

755 The instinct of self-preservation is so strong in man that the Mossi
757 although they ascribe a superhuman origin to illness, nevertheless fight it. It is true that all their treatments combine medicinal and superstitious elements to drive off evil spirits, and whatever the remedy, true medicine or amulet, it is always a tim; there is only the one
759 word to designate it. Some of the natives know how to treat certain illnesses, and people come to consult them, often from far away. One has a medicine against snakes, and he makes it in complete secrecy on a certain day; one knows how to treat colds and bronchitis;
[752] another, dysentery; yet another, sores. The bone-setters are often very skillful, and with the mere pressure of their fingers they can set a dislocated joint or a broken leg; then they enclose it between tightly-bound millet stalks as a splint. These doctors prescribe remedies without resorting to sacrifices or witchcraft. Sometimes they live with their patient to care for him, of course for a fee, especially if the person gets well.

751 Smallpox vaccination is performed, but often too late, on individuals who already have the germ. The vaccine is taken from a seriously ill person without any precautionary antiseptic measures. The vaccinated individual is usually made very sick and sometimes dies of

776 Wintoro at noon when it scorches the earth (Winniga toro). It must be
821 added, however, that sometimes the sun is called Na /Naba/ Wendé, "God-king." At night God is supposed to retire into his hut, since the sun is no longer visible, and yet he continues to be everywhere. "If you commit an offense during the night, God knows about it." The Mossi are likely to say when the sun stands at the zenith, "It is God who makes the sun scorch us today." Thus they do seem, in practice, to make a distinction between God and the sun. The sun is God's dwelling, but it is not God. But what inconsistency in all this!

Natural phenomena are sometimes attributed to God. Lightning kills those who have done evil, it kills livestock wrongly obtained through fraud or theft, and it is sent in punishment by God ... unless it is sent by an enemy. Amulets and fetishes derive their power from
776 God, as already mentioned, and the same applies to medicinal remedies. Illness is usually attributed to an evil spirit who must be
753 appeased, but sometimes it is also attributed to God. The Mossi do not seem to grant a soul to inanimate objects, but only to animate beings: plants, animals, men. Yet, as a rule, inexplicable or abnormal phenomena are attributed to spirits dwelling in inanimate objects.

There are three kinds of spirits: the tisé (plural of tiga, "tree"), who dwell exclusively in trees; the kikirsi (plural of kikiriga), or spirits proper; and the tangamma (plural of tangandé), the protective spirits of the villages who dwell in sacred groves.

The tisé reside preferably in those trees which stand near the huts, but some of them also dwell in the bush. They have a special liking for the tamarind tree and bastard mahogany, but they are not at all fond of the doubalé, which shelters bats. At night they leave their dwelling and go into the huts. Their bodies are human in form, but invisible to the common run of mankind. They are much taller and fatter than men, and they are black and walk with their feet up in the air and their heads down to the ground.

776 At night they wander about, and their presence is betrayed by a
753 darkening of the doorway; they are so fat that they blot out the light. Woe to the man who has no water in his soukala, who has saved no millet beer! The tiga who comes and finds nothing causes pimples to grow all over the man's body; this is the illness characteristic of the tisé. He is fortunate if he gets away with so little, for the tisé can afflict him with many other diseases or even kill him. If the tiga manages to touch someone, the place touched will swell; if someone

776 753 makes noise in the bush under certain leafy trees, his cheeks will swell out. The tisé talk, even during the day. It is their voices which are heard when the wind stirs the leaves. We had /81/ papaw seeds planted all around our dwelling. They had sprouted and grown well; the fruit was already ripening. One morning, no papaw trees were left in [824] Koupéla! The naba had decreed that these were talking trees, that they would cause illness to those who had them in their soukala ... and the papaws had been cut down!

776 782 Fortunately, it is possible to protect oneself against the tisé. First, those trees which shelter them may be felled, and the spirits will move elsewhere. Some very beautiful trees vanish thus from the villages. The tisé may also be appeased with sacrifices. Does this result in tree cult, dendrolatry? Indeed not! The Mossi clearly make the distinction between the tree and the spirit that inhabits it, and they sacrifice to the spirit. Sometimes also, a tree was planted on the [769] grave of the elder who founded the village, and sacrifices are made to the ancestral spirit at the foot of the tree. Finally, there are fetishes more powerful than the tisé. It is enough to know which roots and barks the tisé do not like, to steep them in water, and to place the pot at the door of the hut. When a tiga sees this fetish, he invariably runs away. Some Peul are said to have the power to distinguish between those trees where spirits dwell and those where they do not, and to kill the former trees merely by rubbing them with butter! This must be done in a special way.

776 754 The kikirsi are imps, red or black all over, and only a few centimeters high. Their body has the same shape as ours, but it is much nimbler and more tenuous—something ethereal and impalpable that only the sorcerers can discern. The latter call them with a low whistle or by shaking a peculiarly shaped gourd that looks like a handle [534] ending in a sphere. This gourd is dried without being opened, and the seeds gather in the sphere. The sorcerer makes noise by shaking this instrument, and the kikirsi flock to him singing.

776 There are good and evil kikirsi, and the good ones only do evil when forced to do so; for instance, when someone puts pepper in their sauce. They abhor pepper but they love honey, and every good housewife who wishes to preserve her honey covers it carefully with pepper to prevent the kikirsi from eating it. They are inordinately fond of sesame, and they dote on millet cakes (samsa); every woman who makes millet cakes offers them a few. People who eat samsa while walking are careful to drop a few crumbs to the ground. On the

776 other hand, the kikirsi do not drink fermented millet beer, but they must be offered some before the yeast (da'nodo) is added. They have their preferences like human beings. They know hatred and jealousy, and sometimes they even kill one another. They are said to have two 776 sexes, to marry, and to procreate. They even have the special faculty 845 of always bearing twins, and this is why twins are called by their 551 name and are dedicated to them; it is believed that spirits dwell within them.

776 The birth of twins causes their mother much trouble. Formerly 845 both were sometimes put to death, while at other times only one was killed. When a woman bears twins, she builds at the door of her hut 782 a tiny miniature house where the spirits dwelling /82/ within her children will take shelter. Three times a year if her means allow it, in the spring, in the winter, and at the height of the rainy season, or at least once a year, a guinea hen must be offered to the kikirsi. This fowl is sacrificed exclusively to them. On that day they must also be offered their favorite foods, and this means that honey, sesame, and millet cakes must be purchased, that beer must be prepared and a jar saved without yeast, that millet mush has to be cooked, and especially that no pepper be added to the sauce. Otherwise the husband, wife, or children will be afflicted with a dreadful eye disease, for [753] such is the illness which the kikirsi have the power of visiting on human beings.

776 As children, twins may wear only the kankabra, a garment made 845 of black and whitish threads, the characteristic clothing of the kikirsi. Happily, they are later allowed to dress as they please. If the mother dies, the twins offer the sacrifices themselves and build the small hut that serves as a dwelling for their little spirit. The later born twin is considered the older of the two. They both wear the same bracelet and share everything given to them. It is not considered proper to make a gift to one without giving the same thing to the other. Actually, these customs are to be found in Africa from Bambara country to Tanganyika.

776 To return to the kikirsi themselves, they are present everywhere. In the bush they are fond of termite nests, large and small. They 241 also like open spaces. They are to be found around the villages; there are ponds set apart for the kikirsi, wells considered to belong to them. There are spirits watching over every field, and before sowing, as also before harvesting millet, the master of the field sacrifices a chicken to the spirit on a stone in the middle of the field. The

774 In the course of a dream, the soul may warn its owner of a threaten-
828 ing danger. One day a native, whose village and name were told to
761 me, dreamed that his enemy offered him a kola nut. Much anxiety ensued, for this is a sign used by the soul to indicate that an enemy threatens one with death. In such a case there is only one remedy, to deposit a few cowries on a nest of large red ants, so they will avert the disaster. The man set out immediately for the nearest ant nest. Alas, a snake bit him along the way, and he died before he could offer his gift to the ants! Such occurrences obviously make a profound imprint on the imagination of the natives, who immediately react with the sophism: post hoc, propter hoc. A few such cases are sufficient to anchor them forever in their superstitions, and innumerable such occurrences were related to me.

774 If the soul can leave the body, it is possible to seize it and to pre-
761 vent it from re-entering its body, and this is why our Blacks do not like to be photographed. They say that there is an evil spirit in the box, who takes the soul and eats it. This is proved by the fact that the individual may later be seen on the piece of paper.

774 One becomes sick when his soul cannot re-enter the body because
753 it is held prisoner by an evil sorcerer or by a kikiriga, and many sacrifices must be offered to obtain its release /86/ and return. Entreaties are usually directed to the tangandé in such cases, because it is stronger than all the other spirits, stronger even than the sorcerers, and because its function is to protect the village.

774 Sometimes the soul was so well hidden that the tangandé cannot
761 find it: the sorcerer has eaten it right away, or the tangandé itself
754 is in collusion; or the ancestral spirits are calling the sick person; or,
775 finally, it is God who sent the disease. Nothing can be done, and the person dies. His soul changes names, and henceforth is called kyma. It leaves the body at the moment of death. If it was taken by a sorcerer or by the ancestral spirits, at the moment of death it leaves the sacred grove where it was held captive. It proceeds to the place of souls from where it will return to the grave whenever sacrifices are offered to it. It will also return if it wishes to afflict the survivors with a disease of some sort.

775 Is the soul punished for the evil it has done on earth and rewarded
735 for the good? Opinions on the subject differ. Some say that when one gives alms to the poor, and the Mossi frequently do, when one is generous and hospitable, God takes all that has been given and sets

784 born among the Peul, to whom dog flesh is forbidden, may have the
262 dog as kisgou. Sometimes the kisgou concerns only him, his son, and grandson and not his other descendants, because the son and grandson will follow his own soul, while the soul of the other descendants will follow that of his mother, their great-grandmother, to whom dog flesh is not forbidden. A sorcerer's reasoning against which there is no argument!

/89/ This kind of kisgou is the more binding of the two, but it may be terminated if the person who established it offers the proper sacrifices, or if one of his descendants, of his own will, releases himself and his children from it. Thus the family of the Saman'Naba, Prime Minister of Koupéla, has the hare as kisgou. When the naba saw his Christian brothers and son eat hare flesh with impunity, without becoming blind or leprous, he took to eating it himself without ill effects.

784 Parents teach their children about the various family kisgou and
869 instill the proper awe into them so they will not eat these animals.
753 Involuntary disregard of one's kisgou may lead to illness, and the sorcerer consulted indicates what has to be done and what sacrifice must be offered to the tangandé to obtain his forgiveness. If the slip was deliberate, if it showed contempt, no forgiveness is possible.

784 The second kind of kisgou is quite special and personal. It consists
758 of the various prohibitions imposed by the sorcerers on a sick person.
262 A certain kind of meat or sauce is forbidden to the patient, or he may not drink water containing millet flour, or he may not eat millet or bean cakes. This is how a poor rachitic child with a heart disease was successively forbidden practically every kind of food. His relatives had the greatest difficulty finding those foods that were not forbidden to him, and eventually he died of starvation. All such kisgou terminate of course with the illness that caused them, unless the disease is incurable and lasts to the end of the patient's life.

Chapter 2. The Cult

000 If we define religion with Mgr. Le Roy (1) as "The body of beliefs,

1. Mgr. Le Roy, op. cit., p. 49.

782 755 Then the sacrificer and his assistants eat the victim, but the patient does not partake of it.

782 751 The silent sacrifice, mand'moukou—also called "egg sacrifice," mand'gellé, because an egg is offered—is made in the following [753] circumstances. Some diseases have the dismal faculty of talking like people. They call someone, who answers to his name thinking that a human being has called him. This is sufficient, he will fall ill and die.

The sorcerer decrees that such a disease threatens the village, and that a silent sacrifice is in order. The naba and the elders anxiously delegate one of the men among them to offer the sacrifice. On the following day in the morning, the appointed elder takes an egg, often also a kola nut and special roots, and follows the path which the disease would take if it came to the village. He walks in complete silence. When he reaches a certain point, he brings the egg close to his lips and tells it secretly that a disease threatens the village, and that if the disease tries to follow this path, the egg must stop it. Then he places the egg, kola nut, and roots upon the ground or buries them and retraces his steps. /94/ The egg, a chicken-to-be that cannot yet talk, is chosen as a symbol of the silence that must be observed to ward off the disease.

In the procedure called "bad sacrifice," the victim is not eaten by those present but left on the spot, where it rots or is eaten by vultures and hyenas. Any animal may be offered in this fashion, but the sorcerer alone may decide when the sacrifice is called for. It is usually performed to avert a general misfortune, for example, to ward off a contagious disease that will devour the animal and leave the people alone. The victim is sometimes abandoned alive and driven into the bush.

782 Anything may be offered in sacrifice if the sorcerer says so: kola nuts, cowries, the ashes of certain barks or roots, red stones, the inner fruit of the karite tree, etc. Chickens are the victims most commonly chosen, but sacrifices of goats and sheep are not uncommon. We have already mentioned the guinea hen as the sacrifice preferred by the kikirsi. The nabas are sometimes required to sacrifice cows or donkeys in certain cases. Some nabas, but not all, may sacrifice horses. Finally, even men were sacrificed in the old days. Certain tangamma [563] were greedy for human sacrifices, and the Peul were often used for this purpose. Natives with light skins tending to red, thus closer to [826] the color of ancestral spirits which are said to be white, were sacrificed to these spirits in preference to any others.